A Statement
by the Rev. Dr. George G. Bartlett
Dean Emeritus of the
Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Philadelphia

In July last (1945) I was surprised to receive a letter from the Rev. Dr. G. Bromley Oxnam, Bishop of the Methodist Church for the New York Area. Bishop Oxnam, who had succeeded our own Bishop Tucker as president of the Federal Council of Churches, had just returned from an official visit to Europe. I quote his letter in full.

"July 11, 1945.

"My dear Dean Bartlett:

"During a recent visit to Greece I had the honor of being entertained by the Regent and of spending two very wonderful days with him. He very generously requested the Bishop of Edessa to fly down from Salonika to be with me during that period because the Bishop speaks perfect English. During our conversations together the Bishop told me he had been a student at the Divinity School in Philadelphia and particularly asked me to convey his greetings to you. He spoke almost in reverence when he used your name.

"You will be interested to know that he has become one of the prominent leaders of the Orthodox Church in Greece, is highly regarded by the Archbishop, and I heard one or two mention that he may some day become the Archbishop. What impressed me, though, more than his abilities in administration was the spiritual quality of the man. His religion is real, his spirit humble and brotherly. My son, who is a chaplain and was with me, said he had never met a man who exemplified more of the real spirit of the Christ than this Bishop, your former student. I thought you would be happy to have this word.

"Ever sincerely yours,
G. Bromley Oxnam (signed)"

May I explain the allusion to the "Bishop of Edessa"?

In the latter part of 1921 I had several conferences with Archbishop Meletios of Athens who was then in this country. The Archbishop was convinced that clergymen of the Greek Orthodox Church who were to minister to their compatriots here should have not only the usual traditional Greek training for the ministry but also a supplementary training in one of the divinity schools of the Episcopal Church in America: this, he believed, would better fit these Greek presbyters to be wise leaders of their people who were making their homes in this country. The Archbishop also felt that if Greek and American candidates for Holy Orders could, for a time, live and study together, the result would be a deeper mutual understanding between the Orthodox Church and our own, which, in God's good time, might promote the reunion of our sadly divided Christendom.

The Archbishop's suggestion appealed to me and to my colleagues. Indeed our School had long favored and promoted a policy (limited and modest) of inter-denominational theological education: students in our Graduate Department, and even an occasional student in the Undergraduate Department, having been members of other Communions than our own.

For the moment, however, nothing came of Archbishop Meletios' proposal. But in 1928 I received a letter from Meletios' successor in the Archbishopric of Athens asking us to accept as a student his "dearly-beloved pupil", Panteleimon Constantinou Papayeoryiou, "Archimandrite of the Piraeus and official preacher for the Archdiocese of Athens", who was a graduate of the University of Athens. We gladly said "yes".

I shall never forget Panteleimon's first dramatic appearance. We were at Evening Prayer in the Chapel of the School when the main door opened, and Panteleimon walked in: a striking figure, in the street dress of a Greek priest, flowing robes and brimless stovepipe hat: a tall man, full-bearded, alert, and superbly handsome!

Panteleimon studied with us for two years, taking his bachelor's degree in theology in 1929 and his master's degree in 1930. On his arrival he could speak only a word or two of English; before he left us his English was fluent. He was an able student, a true and devout Christian; and he had a keen sense of humor. Few men, during my many years as dean so endeared themselves to students and faculty alike. While he was with us, the artist in charge was in process of designing and executing his notable series of stained glass windows for the National Cathedral in Washington; and, how I do not now recall, he met Panteleimon and persuaded him to sit for a study of the figure of our blessed Lord for one

of those windows. This, I believe, was installed. Thus our National Cathedral carries in its fabric a likeness of this student of the Philadelphia Divinity School who, if the Methodist Bishop of New York is right, may one day become Archbishop of Athens, and the ruling head of the ancient Orthodox Church in Greece!

On his return to Greece, Panteleimon was, ere long, consecrated Bishop Suffragan of Athens; then was transferred to the see of Talantiou; and, some few years ago, was made Metropolitan (or Archbishop) of Edessa and Pella. Until the war broke out, I had frequent letters from him; but then direct communication ceased.

But in August of 1945, a month after Bishop Oxnam's letter reached me, I received a letter from Panteleimon himself. And to submit this letter, and its touching appeal, is the real purpose of this long statement. I quote the letter in full.

"Edessa, 16th July 45.

"My dear Dean:

"After a long silence, caused by the most tyrannic and cruel slavery, under which Greece went on in the last four years, I write this letter to my dear School letting you know that, by the protection of God, we are living.

"It is not easy to describe in a letter the sufferings of Greece, during these critical years, neither can I narrate the many and great trials and temptations of the people of God, in many ways and circumstances. Besides the conquerors' tribulations and malices, many other calamities – the most of them from within, from people of our own– fell upon our country and attacked many of our people, so that, in addition to the conquerors' crimes and murders, thousands of innocent brothers were killed by people of the same blood and race. It was natural that in such a cruel and vicious attack and attempt for the imposition of a system which the great majority of the Greek people reject and disapprove, people of Christian principles, who truly

wanted to keep the Word and Will of God, confronted hatred and persecutions. They had to live and carry out their duties through many sacrifices so that many of Christ's apostles and disciples had to say in their prayers 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long. For thy name's sake we are persecuted. For thy sake men say all manner of evil against us falsely, hate us and cast out our name as evil. Keep us faithful unto death; faithful to the will of the Father and to thy Word.'

"I had no doubts that all of you were thinking of us and praying for us; and I was deeply touched to receive some two years ago your most lovely and comforting letter. It was a beneficial gift of the Divine Providence that such a letter, escaping the eyes and hands of the conqueror, arrived here to my great joy and comfort. May the Lord grant you His reward for the help and strength you gave me by that letter so full of sympathy and kind words for my Country, my people and myself.

"From that letter and other friendly letters, just received, I understand that my friends in America still think of me as suffragan Bishop to the Archbishop of Athens, but this is my fourth year as Bishop of Edessa and Pella up here in Northern Greece where, by the help of God, we have done some things to the Glory of the Lord and the profit of our people.

"Edessa, where I have my See, was the Capital city of the Macedonian Kingdom, famous for its glory and power between 4-2 Century B. C., and Pella is the native City of Great Alexander. Except that "old Glory" which may be of no use and value for some modern people we have plenty of natural beauties which make the place lovely and pleasant, with the exception of the conquerors' barbarous traces in ruins and destruction through all my diocese. The greatest tragedy in that respect is the burning of a great part

of the city of Edessa where, in two hours, hundreds of houses and four churches were entirely destroyed. One of those Churches was the biggest in the city and another was the most valuable of all for its antiquity and its old and marvellous Byzantine Frescoes. The whole situation here is so difficult that I do not venture for a reconstruction of all those churches, but I must erect, God willing, at least one Church which will be our Cathedral. May I hope that my school through my dear professors and fellow students and all its friends will help me to bring to a successful end this sacred and most heavy duty of mine? Our need for a cathedral is so great and urgent.

"I realize that even in the United States the collection of money is now a very difficult work, but our need for a church able to contain a congregation of about 1500 people, is so great and urgent, and the sympathy of you all to us, poor and suffering as we are, is so encouraging, that I don't hesitate to put under the special patronage of my dear School the reconstruction of my Cathedral. We have not decided as yet about our new Cathedral's name—sometimes my thought stops at the "Annunciation" – but the school may dedicate it in the name of its liking.

"This personal letter to you is a letter to my school too. Kindly send it to the Dean. I don't know whether the school is in action and who is the Dean at the present time.

"Please remember me to all, and convey my best regards and wishes to the most noble Mrs. Bartlett and to all the dear friends of our School.

"With love and wishes in Christ our Saviour,

Affectionately yours,
Panteleimon, Metropolitan
of Edessa and Pella."

I am fully aware of the great and innumerable demands which are harassing generous churchmen. Yet I hope that a

substantial sum may go out to this American-trained bishop in Greece for the rebuilding of a house of worship in Edessa. Such a gift would be a signal token of our international good will and of our deep sympathy for fellow Christians in their time of acute anxiety and need.

As it happens, I am myself in process of moving, perhaps for what few years remain to me, to Southern California where two of my three children are making their homes. In the circumstances I can do nothing, even in a matter which so deeply interests me, except to send this statement through the mails to a few good people. But I have talked the matter over with half a dozen laymen who have approved my purpose and have consented to have their names attached as co-sponsors to my appeal.

Checks may be drawn and sent to

William M. Elkins,
303 Land Title Building,
Broad and Chestnut Streets,
Philadelphia, Pa.

who will, in due course, forward whatever sum is forthcoming to Panteleimon, Metropolitan of Edessa and Pella.

GEORGE G. BARTLETT,
Dean Emeritus, Philadelphia
Divinity School.

Co-sponsors:

William M. Elkins
Samuel F. Houston
P. Blair Lee
W. W. Montgomery
C. C. Morris
Owen J. Roberts

P. S. — A letter just received from my Greek friend tells me that he and his people have been hard at work and have secured pledges of money, materials and labor, which will come within $15,000 of meeting the full estimated cost of a church to accommodate 1500 worshippers. I think we can feel that any aid we may give will go to those who are doing their utmost to help themselves.